

## Youth in agriculture - Report on activities

### *Problem definition*

The lack of young people in the agricultural sector is noticeable all over the world. In Europe, only about 11% of agricultural producers are under the age of 40, which is the limit that defines a young farmer. In neighboring countries, the statistics are similar, while the Republika Srpska does not yet have official data, with the information that the average age of the holder of an agricultural holding in the RS is 54 years.

Young people in agriculture are a key group for the sustainability of food security at the national and world level, and in addition, their task and destiny is the development and adoption of new production technologies, the improvement of agriculture and the creation of answers to current challenges such as climate change. At the same time, the lack of young people in agriculture represents the greatest threat to the strategic position of a country, which, in the absence of young people, risks insufficient food production for its own population, rural decline and negative natural growth.

### *Campaign*

Due to all of the above, the Agricultural Projects Coordination Unit of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of the Republic of Srpska together with the Youth Agripreneurs Network (Mreža mladih agropreduzetnika MMA) launched the campaign "Youth in Agriculture" whose goals are as follows:

- reaching as many young people as possible in agriculture throughout the Republic of Srpska,
- gathering information about the current needs and challenges of young people in agriculture,
- defining the priorities of institutional action with the aim of a better position of young people in agriculture,
- the positioning of young people in agriculture in the public space, but also as a focus group for the action of all relevant institutions and organizations and
- strengthening the capacity and influence of the NGO Youth Agripreneurs Network as the first and only association that brings together young people in agriculture at the level of Republika Srpska and B&H and as such advocates policies in favor of young people.

The first phase of the "Youth in Agriculture" campaign began on March 21, 2024. and ended on May 29, 2024. The campaign consisted of six workshops held in Banja Luka, Prijedor, Bijeljina, Ozren, East Sarajevo and Trebinje. The workshops consisted of presentations:

1. "Opportunities for young people through the READP project" i
2. "Youth in agriculture and the importance of their project literacy".

At the same time, young agricultural producers or agronomists from the region where the workshop was held presented themselves at each workshop through presentations. During the campaign, the following took part:

1. Bojan Ćikić and Miloš Galić: Subsidies in agriculture in the function of strengthening the position of young people;
2. Đorđe Grujić: Development of PZ Smart Village Knežica through project positioning;
3. Mara Pupčević: Maplet - a combination of tradition and agribusiness;
4. Dragana Duvnjak Krndija: Young successful people in agribusiness;
5. Žana Novaković: Jahorina tea - along the paths of nature to work;
6. Marinko Perović: P&S RANCH - as nature intended.

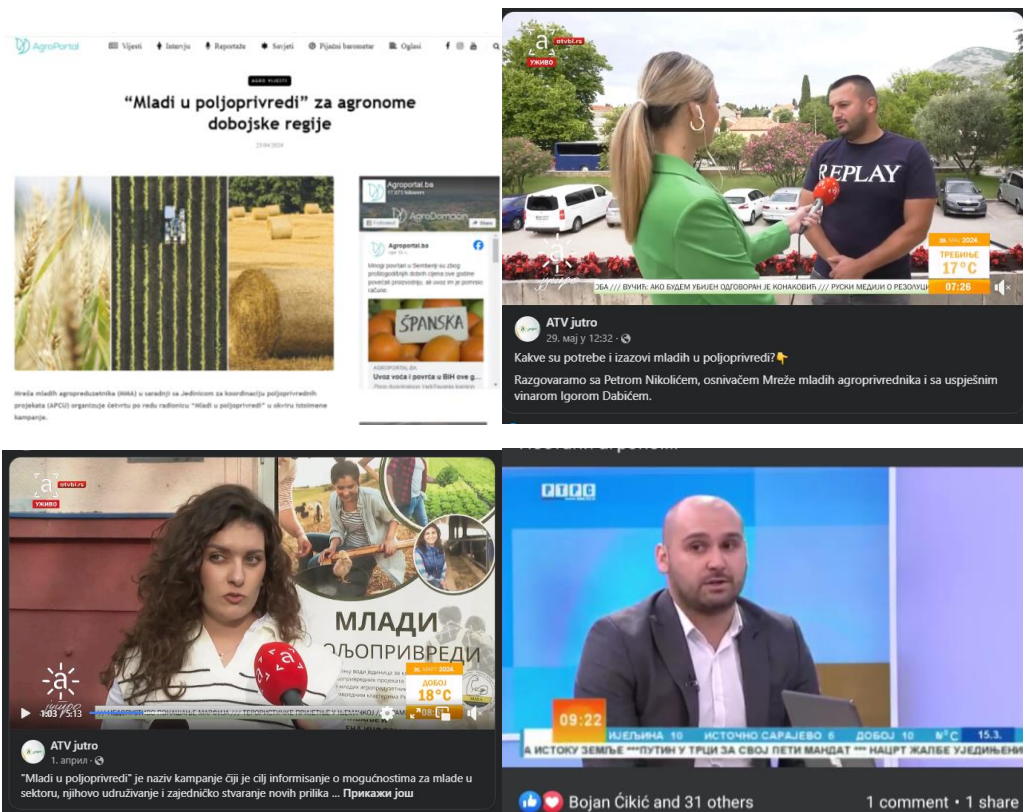
The goal of each workshop was to collect data on challenges, opportunities, problems and the general opinion and impression of young people in agriculture on trends in the agricultural sector, plans for the future, etc. Information is collected through:

- interactive work throughout the workshop and encouraging discussion,
- holding a discussion in the World Caffè format,
- "online" survey which consisted of 30 questions and
- informal lunch/networking

This approach made it possible to see the situation from the point of view of young people in agriculture and agribusiness, both agricultural producers and trained agronomists from all over the Republic of Srpska, more urban areas closer to larger city centers, but also young people living in extremely underdeveloped municipalities, higher altitudes and less favorable areas. The information obtained helped us, the representatives of institutions and organizations, to get to know first-hand the opportunities, obstacles, plans and aspirations of young people in agriculture.

The invitation to young people in each region was made through the communication channels of the Youth Agripreneurs Network (viber group) and through social networks, and the special target group was unemployed young agronomists and food technologists, where the goal was to familiarize them with the possibilities of subsidized internships and support for self-employment. The invitation to unemployed engineers went through the Employment Office (Zavod za zapošljavanje RS) of the Republic of Srpska, while at the same time as the organizers we had no insight into the effectiveness of these invitations by Employment Office. Employment Office does not have permission to share data with third parties and organizations, which we consider the only aggravating circumstance that potentially reduced the number of informed unemployed engineers during the campaign. However, we believe that thanks to other means of information, unemployed engineers will turn to the Youth Agripreneurs Network organization themselves, and this is already happening.

Activities during the campaign were covered by the media, television and radio reports and guest appearances, as well as through social networks and portals. The first workshop received the largest media space when the campaign was made official on March 31, 2024. year at the Faculty of Agriculture in Banja Luka and the last workshop that took place as part of the Consultation of Agricultural Engineers of the Republika Srpska in Trebinje, 05/29/2024. years. These two workshops also gathered the largest number of people.



Sl. 1-4. Media reporting on the activities of the Network and the "Youth in Agriculture" campaign

### Campaign results

The first phase of the "Youth in Agriculture" campaign enabled:

- reaching over 150 young people in agriculture (agricultural producers and agronomists) throughout the Republic of Srpska and informing and networking them,
- familiarization with the needs of young people in agriculture and their plans for the future,
- defining the basic priorities of institutional action for a better position of young people in agriculture and agribusiness i
- strengthening the organization and positioning of the youth association in agriculture as an entity that will propose measures and advocate in favor of the youth.

Over 150 high school students, faculty students, young agricultural producers and agronomists participated in the workshops held in the first phase of the campaign. The results of the survey and the information obtained through the discussions at the workshops indicate that:

1. Young people see perspective in agricultural production and want to go in the direction of self-employment and life in the countryside;
2. Young people have limitations and obstacles when it comes to starting their own agribusiness or continuing to engage in agricultural activities, namely:

- a. lack of available land - in certain regions of the Republic of Srpska (Semberija, Posavina, Lijevče polje) there is no available arable land. Large plots are given to concessionaires who cultivate 1,300 - 6,000 hectares. These concessions were granted mostly about 10 years ago when interest was not at the level it is today. However, institutions must find a way to enable the start or expansion of agricultural activities for young people by allocating arable land for their use.
- b. unavailable initial capital - engaging in agricultural production requires large investments in machinery, equipment and facilities at the beginning of the business, which is difficult for a young person to achieve. Currently, through the Rulebook on Subsidies of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of the RS, holders of degrees in the Faculty of Agriculture, Technology and Veterinary Faculty are entitled to 40,000 KM in grants for self-employment and the purchase of equipment for agricultural activities. We believe that this amount of funds is not enough, and that this incentive measure should be increased and extended to all interested young people to start agribusiness.
- c. there is a lack of professional support and networking - considering that agricultural activity is exposed to various risks that cannot be influenced, connection and networking are very important for young people in agriculture, in such a way that they get the feeling that they are not alone, that is, that they will have help and support in moments of failure, accidents, bad years, etc. The Youth Agripreneurs Network partially secured this segment through its joint activities, and the good communication between the Network and the institutions enabled the young people to feel that the system works and provides all the necessary support.
- d. insufficiently developed social environment of the village - there is a need for improvement and development of social activities in the village, i.e. initiation of cultural events, youth centers, etc. In certain areas, we have examples of the actions of individuals and smaller groups that are generators of the development of their local community based on activism and volunteerism, so the elements of these movements need to be analyzed and initiated and directed to action in other parts of the RS as well. For young people to stay in the countryside, it is not enough to engage in profitable agribusiness, but the fulfillment of human social needs and cultural content in rural areas.

During the first phase of the campaign, special emphasis was placed on reaching and informing potential trainees in agriculture. During the campaign, we met a large number of young people, graduates of agricultural and food technology engineers, some of whom are already directed and connected with employers in accordance with their pretensions. Thanks to the possibility of subsidized internships, the Network is already positioned as an organization that mediates the employment of agronomists, so interested companies and unemployed engineers are already contacting the Network's contacts.

The activities of the Youth Agripreneurs Network have been recognized by the private and public sectors, so the Network has already been supported by companies operating in the agricultural sector: Agrimatco d.o.o. and Golić Trade d.o.o., while the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of the RS provided 30,000.00 KM for the upcoming Youth Conference.

Thanks to its number, activities and institutional support, the Youth Agripreneurs Network is positioned as a new wave whose influence is manifested on the agricultural policy of the Republic of Srpska, the institutional work of the relevant Ministry, faculties, other

associations of agricultural producers, etc. After the first phase of the campaign, there were numerous positive reactions and impressions, as well as the conclusion that this new energy was needed to initiate certain steps that will lead to the sustainability of the village and agriculture.

In the future, the Youth Agripreneurs Network plans to implement the following activities:

1. Expanding membership - the association's ambition is to gather at least 500 young agricultural producers and agronomists at the level of Republika Srpska, which would make MMA the most numerous association in the agricultural sector;
2. Positioning of the organization during the creation of the Rulebook on Subsidies - Youth Agripreneurs Network, as an association of producers at the national level, will participate in the creation of the Rulebook on Subsidies and has already nominated certain measures that will lead to more effective support for young people;
3. Formation of local teams and work in local communities - By reaching a larger number of people, those who show interest and willingness to work will be directly involved in the work of the organization and at the local level will advocate policies in favor of young people, reach out to new members and spread information about new possibilities and opportunities for young people in agriculture.
4. Organization of the 1st Conference of Youth in Agriculture of the Republic of Srpska - The conference is planned to be held in September in Obudovac for three days, and the goal is to gather 200-250 young people from all over the Republic of Srpska for education, networking, a mini fair, awards of the best agribusiness, etc.
5. Starting a magazine about young people in agriculture - The network plans to start a magazine that will be published 3 times a year, which will cover the topics of young people in agriculture, the family, the village, the social and business environment of rural areas, etc. The magazine will promote the agribusiness of young people from Republic of Srpska, and in addition to the promotion, it will also have an educational character through professional texts.

# Who are the young people in the agriculture of Republika Srpska?



*Photos from the Campaign „Youth in Agriculture”*







